



**USAID | PHILIPPINES**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## **PRESS CLIPPINGS**

Office of Program Resources Management

(632) 552-9907

***Tuesday, September 27, 2005***

**“USAID/Philippines does not vouch for the accuracy or the opinions of the articles provided in this press clipping service and assume no responsibility for their content. Please contact USAID/Philippines at [infoph@usaid.gov](mailto:infoph@usaid.gov) if you have any questions about USAID programs and projects.”**

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4**

**(Management of Productive, Life-Sustaining Natural Resources Strengthened)**

#### **Landmark legislation bodes well for Mindanao forests**

**(Source: SunStar Manila Internet Edition – 9/27/05)**

THE forests have won a reprieve, and the people can breathe easier. With a comprehensive forest management legislation now in place, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Armm) is on track to secure the future of the region's forests for the benefit of generations to



**REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT** - The Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao and Department of Environment and Natural Resources officials meet for the signing of the Regional Sustainable Forest Management Act, also known as the People's Bill, being a product of consultation with stakeholders in the region. (Ronald F. Jabal)

come.

Top officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Armm gathered recently in Cotabato City for the formal signing of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act, otherwise known as the Regional Sustainable Forest Management Act of 2004. The act seeks to protect and conserve the natural forests, rehabilitate denuded areas, and develop and manage forestlands in the region. It provides economic opportunities to upland dwellers without impairing the environment; and incorporates Islamic principles to insure effective forest management.

"It is time to make up for our long years of neglect," outgoing Armm Governor Parouk Hussin said in his message prepared for the event. Governor-elect Datu Zaldy Ampatuan expressed his support in no uncertain terms: "My term will be dedicated to this priority - the protection of our environment and natural resources."

The country's first regional law on forest management was the result of years of work by the DENR-Armm headed by Forest Management Bureau Director Brahim Andamen and Foresters Arupin Hussin and Alindatu Pagayao, with guidance from Regional Secretary Kabuntalan Emblawa and DENR Region Executive Director Jim Sampulna.

They were unanimous in acknowledging the support of the Armm Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA) and technical assistance provided by the US Agency for International Development (Usaid)-funded Philippine Environmental Governance (EcoGov) Project.

Assemblyman Suharto Midtimbang, the principal author of the Act, said the signing is "The fruit of the efforts to enact concrete steps towards the genuine protection of our forest resources." For his part, RLA Speaker Hartimil Hassan said, "We hope not only to arrest the destruction of the region's natural resources, but witness its rebirth."

Emblawa added that, "This law will contribute to the attainment of our cherished aspiration - sustained peace and development in our region."

In a show of commitment to the act, the Armm workforce was led by the region's DENR team in a mass tree-planting activity at the Dimapatoy Watershed the next day. Around 1,500 mahogany, narra and antipolo seedlings were planted in the watershed, which is the province of Maguindanao's main source of water.  
**(PR)**